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"THE MAYOR OF STRATFORD'S DREAM."

AN AVONSBY LEGEND.

"I love a ballad in print, o' life, for then we are sure they are true."—(Winter's Tale.)

Did you hear of the Mayor of Stratford's dream
Of the dread disaster on Avon's stream,
To a Worshipful Mayor of the days gone by
And his very sad loss,—Oh, many a sigh
Have his worships successors sent up, but in vain,
For the loss of the Mayor's badge of office and chain.
But first, as a start, pray let me impart
How the thing happened which so grieved the heart
Of the Mayor, at the loss of this rare work of art.
So without more delay, I would hasten to say
That 'twas known in the town as Swan upping day,
When each bird has his foot marked, willing or nay,
In a highly uncivilized sort of way,
In fact, 'twas a kind of Swan's "*auto-da-fé*"
So the folks are all merry as larks in May,
The men shirk work, and the lads truant play,
And the whole town rejoices in holiday.
Brightly the rays of the autumn sun shone
On that morning of sixteen sixty one,
As the people all down to the river come
Discussing the news with a right busy hum.
Goodmen Robins, and Such, and Bunn,
Goodmen Morris, and Kemp, and Dunn,
Guppy and Jellyman, Green and Brown,
With a great many others whose names are not down,
Of the worthies and cronies who lived in the town.
And first walked the Mayor in his robes rich and fine,
With his face flushed the colour of old port wine
For it happened just after his hour to dine.
His Worship was short, and awfully stout,
He limped as if he was twinged with the gout,
And excess of good living had found him out.
For he drank sack and sherry at supper and dinner,
And would now be termed rather a bibulous sinner,
And be told "'twould be genteel to be somewhat thinner."
His breathing was thick, jerky and quick,
And he waddled along with a gold-mounted stick.
Deep cushioned in fat gleamed his eyes black and merry,
While his little pug nose shone as red as a cherry,
And round his short neck hung the Mayor's gold chain,
In the wearing of which he was dreadfully vain,
For it sparkled and shone in the morning light,
Reflecting the sunshine dazzlingly bright!
And the boys are all pushing from left and from right,
To gaze open mouthed with amaze and delight—
In their eager desire, almost ready to fight,
For to get just one peep at the marvellous sight.
Next came the Aldermen, two by two,
Alderman Birch, and Hill and New,
Looking so highly respectable too,
And fit for the work they were going to do.
Then stiffly behind with his nose in the air
Walked Busby the Beadle, displaying a pair
Of calves in silk stockings so clean and so white,
A pattern of Beadles he really was quite.
Then came the Constables, grim and fierce,
Harris and Kendrick, Bustler and Pearce,
Constable Brown, and Constable Ball,
Good men and true they were reckoned by all.
Now the boats are brought up and the Mayor embarks,
With a grunt and a puff, while some wag remarks
To his friend looking on at the river's brink,

With a half suppressed laugh and comical wink,
"It wouldn't take much to make the boat sink."
Then the Aldermen follow in various craft
And start in procession away from the raft,
While the Swans in astonishment gaze at the sight,
Till they see them come nearer, and filled with affright,
Alarmed by each constable's yell, shout and scream,
They turn tail, and scutter away up the stream,
Through the old Clopton Bridge, and on by the Lench,
Fright'ning out of their wits, the pike, bream, and tench,
Till at last on by Tiddington's open reach,
They pause to consult how to best force the breach.
For more boats appear on the opposite quarter
To drive them again to the lowermost water,
Closer they come, and the poor swans surround,
Who strive, but in vain, for some way to be found,
Some mode of escape, each devising or trying,
By scuttering and fluttering, by diving or flying.
But the Constables collar each one by the neck
And drag them unwillingly on to the deck,
Where they lie huddled up in a perfect wreck.
When a noble old bird, much alarmed at the row,
Dived down, and came up again under the bow
Of the boat, where the Mayor sat, as tars say, "abaft her"
Watching the fun, and shaking with laughter,
When, somehow or other, why, nobody knows,
The terrified swan from the water arose,
And flew right at his Worshipful's red pug nose.
The Mayor he screamed and turned very white,
And worked himself into a terrible fright,
And he hollas and calls upon every man,
"To come to his rescue as soon as they can,
To help him, or he should be smothered outright,
Or die of a fit brought about by the fright."
When the Mayor in this dreadful dilemma they view,
All the Aldermen hurried, and Constables too,
And made such a noise, and a hallibooloo,
Surely never was seen such a dreadful do,
When lo! in their haste the poor man to deliver,
No doubt they were nervous, and all on the quiver,
But, (why only to think of it makes one to shiver,)
They upset the boat, and the Mayor in the river.
Oh! the crash, and the splash, and tremendous commotion,
Like some unwieldy porpoise disporting mid-ocean,
With,—well anything short of a graceful motion.
Then the Aldermen shout at the top of their might—
"Oh! jump in and save him, quick, while he's in sight:
Or he'll sink and be drowned at the bottom outright,"
Then each looked at the other, to see who would first
Plunge in to the rescue, but none of them durst,
When the cry—"There he is!" all at once arose,
And from being so stout, so the folks suppose,
The Mayor, like a cork to the surface uprose,
In a horrible plight, for he snorts and blows
To get rid of the mud from his eyes and nose.
Then Alderman Jellyman clutched at his toes,
And Busby the Beadle got hold of his throat,
And dragged him, all dripping wet, into the boat.
There he lay like a turtle, limp, gasping for breath
And his face very much the complexion of death,
Choking and sputtering, all the while uttering,
Very bad words, and fierce menaces muttering,

When some one exclaimed, "The chain! where's the chain!
Oh! its gone to the bottom, Oh never again
Will it deck the broad breast of our worthy Mayor Payne."
They searched up and down with the greatest of care,
They dragged and they fished in the stream here and there,
With oars and with sticks, with hooks and with poles,
They scraped all the bottom, and poked all the holes,
And tried every means the lost badge to regain,
But all to no use, it was labour in vain,
They could never recover the missing gold chain;

Sadly down stream the procession then goes
While his Worship looked gloomy and very morose,
With his temper much sourer, as one might suppose,
For his lips had turned purple, and blue cold his nose,
Not the pleasantest feeling, as every one knows.
They soon reached the bridge, and the Mayor home was got,
Where he gave instant orders to bring him a pot
Of the oldest of Malmsey wine, spiced and hot.
Then he lost not a moment in getting to bed
From which he ne'er rose any more, so 'twas said,
But he died of the shock, and a cold in his head,
Which affected his brain, and nigh turned him insane,
For again and again, he doled out the same strain,
"That he could not get over the loss of his chain."

Two hundred years had elapsed and more,
When in eighteen hundred and eighty-four,
The worthy Mayor, who then happened to be
Arthur Hodgson, of Clopton, C.M.G.,
Dreamt the sad dream which above I relate
And on waking exclaimed "'Tis the mandate of fate,
'Twas intended that I should the chain re-instate,
So to carry it out, not a day will I wait."
There and then he resolved to present back once more
To this Borough of Stratford its chain as of yore
And its ancient insignia again restore
More resplendent than ever it was before.
So 'twas planned and designed in the costliest mould
With the Arms of the Monarchs of England enrolled
Who conferred on the Borough its Charter of old.
And the crest of the good Sir Hugh Clopton bold,
Enamelled in splendour of crimson and gold.
With the arms of Earl Totnes and Lord De La Warr,
Clasped in chastely S links with the crest of the Mayor,
And his badge—C. M. G.—set resplendently fair.
While pendant and jewelled the portrait hung there
Of famous Will Shakespeare their poet so rare,
An excellent likeness, the critics declare,
And finished throughout with the greatest of care.

So to Church when they march in procession again,
Corporation and Beadle, and all that maintain
The repute of the town, and its prestige sustain,
Or the Mayor at the Banquet his guests entertain
With the choicest of viands, when flows the champagne,
Dazzlingly bright—reflecting the light,
You will see on his worships broad breast once again
The identical jewel—the Mayor's gold chain.—

E. G. H.

1885.